Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human
Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

The State of Florida has confirmed nearly 2,000 cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Unfortunately, efforts to expand testing capacity in the State have been hampered by shortages of testing supplies. In particular, the Florida Department of Emergency Management reported that they have been unable to acquire adequate supply of swabs and other materials necessary for the collection and transport of patient samples to laboratories for testing.

Last week, Governor Ron DeSantis reported that the State has the capacity to test 625,000 Floridians but the State's orders to medical supply vendors have delivered swabs in "dribs and drabs" leaving much of the testing capacity unused. Twenty-one million Floridians are at risk of COVID-19 as it continues to spread throughout our state. Without testing, the virus will spread silently, and we will not know the extent of the spread until cases show up in our emergency departments.

The continued spread of this virus could completely overwhelm our state's health system. Our efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 will be hindered unless we know where and how far it has spread through a robust testing program. The ongoing expansion of test sites and lab availability will be wasted if we cannot secure the necessary supplies including swabs, protective equipment, and other materials needed to collect, transport, and test as many Floridians as possible.

Thank you for your commitment to the health of the American people and to Floridians during this crisis. We ask that you urgently work with the White House, Vice President Pence and the Coronavirus Task Force, Governor DeSantis, and our State agencies to rush testing supplies to Florida.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Lois Frankel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS